

## The Reverend Marjo Anderson

Narrative Lectionary 2.33 – Easter 3  
Acts 1:1-14

26 April 2020  
Salem, Bridgeport

### “Sheltering in Place”

There they were, stuck inside a room together for who knows how long, their lives on hold.  
They had no choice –

their leader had ordered them to shelter in place because they weren't safe out there.

Oh, they could go out for essential supplies – Thomas usually made the food runs –

but the danger was real: they could very easily die.

They knew that – but it didn't make waiting any easier.

It had been over a month now – 40 days, actually –

and they couldn't get their leader to tell them how much longer this would go on.

Apparently he didn't have any more idea than they.

He just promised that one day soon they'd be given immunity

and then they'd be able to go out into the world again.

What that world would look like,

how their lives would be changed,

what the new normal would be, was anyone's guess.

All they could do was pray,

give thanks that they were alive and safe,

and make the best of each and every day.

At the end of Lent, I said that this year's experience of Holy Week  
was probably going to be more like that of those first disciples  
than any other we'd ever known.

We had experienced a trauma and were in the midst of grief – just like they had –  
with its full range of emotions –

denial, anger, bargaining, and fear of the future, to name just a few.

This week as I read the story

about Jesus ordering his disciples to remain in their room in the city  
until they were clothed with a power that would protect them,

I realized that once again our experience was mirroring theirs!

They knew what it was like to be locked in behind closed doors for fear of what lay outside.

They knew what it was like to have to wait, day after day, week after week,  
not knowing how long this would last, or how it would end.

They knew what it was like to realize that they could never return to life as they had known it  
and to be simultaneously both fearful and hopeful about what might lie ahead.

They did have reason to hope.

After all, God had played the supreme joke of all time by raising Jesus from the dead.

That had changed everything! Or had it?

Jesus was alive, but they were still imprisoned behind these walls.

Yes, Jesus was still showing up from time to time,

still opening their hearts and minds to what it all meant,

still promising that God had more surprises in store.

So even though they didn't know what the future held, they had hope.

We, too, have reason to hope.

We, too, know that God played the supreme joke of raising Jesus from the dead.

We, too, know that somehow, someday, that changes everything.

No matter where we are, no matter what crisis we face, no matter how uncertain the future,

Jesus keeps showing up,

keeps opening our hearts and minds to what it all means,

and keeps promising that God has more surprises in store.

Dark, evil, demonic forces conspired to kill the One who came to bring abundant life,  
but in raising him from death, God had the last laugh.

And for 2000 years,

no matter how those dark, evil, demonic forces have conspired to kill the church,

God has continued to raise it up from death to life.

Jesus promised that the disciples would one day soon

be empowered to share the secret of abundant life with all the world.

That joke began on Pentecost when the disciples suddenly found themselves

able to communicate in ways they had never imagined

so they could reach people they would otherwise never have been able to reach.

That joke continued as Paul was empowered to share the news beyond the Jewish community  
to the Gentiles.

It continued as Luther translated God's Word into the language of the people

and the printing press produced copy after copy.

And that joke continues today.

If dark, evil, demonic forces thought they could shut the church down

by forbidding people to gather for worship, God again is once again enjoying the last laugh,

because just like at Pentecost we've been given new languages –

like Facebook and YouTube & Zoom –

& our worship is reaching 10 times the # of people who used to gather in our sanctuary!

Yes, even in the midst of this current crisis, Jesus keeps showing up.

Jesus shows up to heal our hearts, mend our minds, bless our bodies & make our spirits sparkle.

And Jesus show up to remind us that no matter what the devil throws at us,

God will always, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, have the last laugh! **Amen**